



by **HOLLIE O'CONNOR**

Supporters of the ongoing effort to build a one-stop social services campus for Hays County residents gathered this week to review architectural plans for the Village Main building in San Marcos.

The stakeholders' meeting coincided with an announcement from U.S. Rep. Lloyd Doggett that the non-profit groups behind the village project are in line for a \$450,000 federal appropriations grant to go toward construction of the main building, the first on the 22-acre campus at Hunter Road and Reimer Ave. The earmark still must be approved by the Senate.

"That will be money to ensure this project becomes a reality as soon as possible," Doggett said. "Different organizations are out there doing their work now, but I think they will be even more effective when they are neighbors, being a one-stop service for Hays County citizens who need a little help."

Hays County non-profit groups involved in the Village project include Community Action, Early

Childhood Intervention – Homespun, the Hays County Family Justice Center and the Women, Infants and Children program.

The Village Main is planned as a 22,000-square-foot complex and will include wings for each of the non-profits, a central common area with a multi-purpose meeting room and a courtyard. The building is expected to cost approximately \$3 million of which \$1 million has been raised or committed including the expected federal funds, said Nora Linares-Moeller, a Family Justice Center board member involved in the Village project.

The city of San Marcos contributed \$500,000. Though times are rough economically, Mayor Susan Narvaiz said, the funding was justified because consolidating non-profits under one roof will save money in the long run.'



"When you have one (project) that is several agencies who would normally compete against each other come together for the sake of efficiency, it deserves our support, and that is what these agencies have done," Narvaiz said.

Doggett said he takes personal interest in the project, especially in the Hays County Family Justice Center, which helps victims of domestic abuse. He said when he was a state senator he

helped obtain funding for a battered women's center, which eventually became Safe Place in Austin and spurred the creation of the Texas Council on Family Violence.

Todd Bennett, principal of TrB Architecture, said Village Main will be built with sustainability in mind. The building will be oriented to maximize natural lighting using rows of windows above eye-level. Native plants will be used in landscaping to limit the need for irrigation and the courtyard will feature a rain garden, which will slow storm water runoff, he said.

Village Main will be the first building clients encounter at the entrance to the Village Campus. The campus will include a food bank, nature center, playground and the Christian Federation of Police Officers youth sports fields, which are already in place on the far east side of the campus.

Rierner Avenue will run through the center of the campus to the sports fields. Bennett said his company aimed to make the campus as friendly and welcoming as possible by utilizing the road.

"We looked at bringing the building to the street so it really has a presence," Bennett said. "We acknowledged that a lot of people will come to this campus by car, but many will come by bus, so we envisioned Rierner being a main street that gives the campus its whole identity and feeling."

Linares-Moeller said the project will be complete in about two years and is still in the fundraising stage. Stakeholders are currently sending requests for grants and asking individuals for donations, she said.